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## The importance of integrity in the security profession: Bringing in human rights

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## 2 The Importance of Integrity in the Security Profession: Bringing in Human Rights

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To explore the meaning of ethics in security and especially law enforcement, this chapter focuses on integrity as the manifestation in conduct and intentions of an ethical foundation and relates it to human rights in particular. Unfortunately, however, the terms *ethics*, *integrity*, *corruption*, and *human rights* are variably used to express myriad meanings, which gives violators an opportunity to rationalise their conduct. For example, when committing integrity violations for a so-called noble cause – or, to paraphrase Shakespeare, ‘doing a little wrong’ in order ‘to do a great right’ (*Merchant of Venice*, IV, 1) – police officers are generally unaware that they are violating human rights. We therefore not only clearly define and distinguish these terms but also argue that violations of human rights and integrity – including corruption – rather than being different phenomena, are manifestations of a common source and an insult to the rule of law.

The chapter begins with a brief exploration of the concepts of ethics and integrity and their meaning for the security sector, after which we introduce a discussion on human rights and its relationship to *shifting security paradigms*. We end with a reflection on the prevention of integrity violations.

### 2.1 Ethics and Integrity

Because corruption tends to dominate the debate about the conceptual differences between integrity, ethics, and corruption (Barker & Carter, 1996; Bull & Newell, 2003; Caiden, 2001; Crank & Caldero, 2000; Heidenheimer & Johnston, 2002; Menzel & Carson, 1999), it is instructive to distinguish at least two different definitions. First, in a more specific or narrower interpretation, corruption is often defined as ‘behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding

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[sic] (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding [sic] influence' (Nye 1967, p. 419; see also Caiden, 2001; Gardiner, 2002). These same elements are included in the definition used by international organisations against corruption, which delimit it as the abuse of office for private gain (Pope, 2000; Transparency International, 2001; United Nations General Assembly, Res. 58/4). In all such definitions, corruption is interpreted as an offence against moral behavioural norms and values, one that therefore involves private interests. Alternatively, corruption can be more broadly defined to include all violations of moral norms and values, including violations of integrity (Kolthoff, 2007, pp. 40–43). In our view, the latter definition can also include crimes and misconduct committed by states.

In fact, Punch (1985) broadened the classic definition of corruption in two ways. First, he recognised that the particular 'ends' of corrupt activity may not necessarily involve personal reward but, rather, may be undertaken for the benefit of a wider group (a specialist squad for example) or the police organisation as a whole. Such a definition differs, therefore, from the view that corruption is 'designed to produce personal gain for the officer or others'. Secondly, Punch broadened the definition to include not only illegitimate but also 'approved goals', a form sometimes, and often misleadingly, referred to as 'noble cause corruption' (Punch, 1994; Bakker & Schulte Nordholt, 1997). For example, police officers' occupational commitment to crime-control through deterrence may be given emotional weight by their daily experience with the suffering of crime victims (Bayley, 2002). That is, unlike judges and prosecutors, police see the raw hurt that criminality inflicts. Hence, for the police, as for most of us, doing justice in such circumstances means ensuring that the perpetrators are caught and punished (Bayley & Bittner, 1984). Police officers are therefore tempted to violate the law in order to serve the wider interest of natural justice (Fitzgerald Commission, 1989; Mollen Commission, 1995). Hence, as demonstrated by Punch's 1985 study of the relationship between street cops, management cops, and undercover operations in the 1980's Amsterdam drug trafficking scene, such violations are likely to occur when police officers are operating in an environment of widespread illegal drug use and large amounts of drugs money (Miller & Blackler, 2005, p. 126). Nevertheless, the argument for the relative significance of exposure to temptation and opportunities applies to many organised crimes, not only drug offences, just as the concept of noble cause corruption is applicable to a wide range of situations involving armed forces.

Ethics (Greek *ethika*, from *ethos*, 'character' or 'custom') are often described as the *principles* or *standards* of human conduct and are at times called *morals* (Latin *mores*, 'customs'). Their study, therefore, is by extension sometimes referred to as moral philosophy. Hence, although in practice ethics often concern right and wrong when a choice between the two will significantly impact others, philosophically, they are frequently associated with ideals and principles far removed from the daily routine. Generally, ethics relate to the norms and principles that 'provide the basic guidelines

for determining how conflicts in human interests are to be settled and for optimising mutual benefit of people living together in groups' (Wittmer, 1994, p. 352). Thus, the term *ethics* refers to the collection of values and norms – of moral standards or principles – that form the foundation of integrity. In other words, ethics are a set of principles, a code of conduct, that provides a framework for action (Lawton, 1998, p. 16), one whose moral nature determines what conduct is judged to be right, just or good.<sup>2</sup> Ethics can also, however, be viewed as a reflection on *morality* (Kimman, 1991), the body of unwritten rules and habits, the basis on which individuals label something respectable or fair. Ethical duties must therefore be distinguished from legal duties just as ethics must be distinguished from law: whereas the latter can enforce specific conduct, ethics must convince with arguments. Hence, the underlying assumption of ethics is voluntariness, which should, however, not be confused with freedom from obligation.

The broader conceptualisation of corruption as a synonym for all violations of moral norms and values leads almost automatically to the concept of *integrity* that has come to the forefront in many developed countries (Benjamin, 1990; Fijnaut & Huberts, 2002; Huberts & Van den Heuvel, 1999; Klockars, 1997; Klockars, Kutnjak, Ivkovi, Harver, & Haberfeld, 2000; Montefiori & Vines, 1999; Uhr, 1999). Yet, according to Wempe (1998), despite a common understanding of what it means for someone's integrity to be called into question or damaged, integrity is a difficult concept. Most particularly, when someone's integrity is damaged, grounds for trust disappear so that, as in the case of politicians or civil servants, they can no longer function in a credible manner.

Because integrity literally means being whole, sound, or undamaged, an indirect analogy can be drawn with fruit: just as a spot on an apple may indicate a rotten area under the otherwise sound peel, so too an individual's misconduct raises questions about that person's character, most particularly, when the misconduct indicates a behavioural pattern. Thus, the central question related to integrity involves motivation. Is the individual concerned with carrying out responsibilities as well as possible or are other motives, like self-interest, playing a role? If other motives do play a part, it calls into question the person's integrity or wholeness; it is no longer clear to the onlooker which motive determined the action.

The analogy with fruit suggests that to control corruption, one should remove corrupt persons (the apples) from the organisation (the barrel). Does this rotten apple theory actually hold, however? Not according to Punch (1994) who opposed this individualistic approach in his analysis of police corruption. For him, the implication that weak

2 In many definitions, the adjectives 'moral' and 'ethical' are nearly identical; for example, in Preston's (2007) comment that 'ethics is concerned about what is *right, fair, just, or good*; about what we ought to do, not just about what *is* the case or what is most acceptable or expedient' (p. 16).

or vulnerable individuals are tempted to depart from the path of virtue is a matter of avoidable individual psychology. Rather, what should be studied is the context, the wider environment, and the system within which corruption takes place. Of course, bad apples exist, as does the individual element, but when an individual is operating in a social context it is the interaction between the two that matters.

## 2.2 Ethics, Integrity, and Security

In the first chapter of this book, Den Boer introduced the term *shifting security paradigm*: radicalisation, terrorism, organised crime, pro-active police methods, anxieties that turn into inter-ethnic tensions, the introduction of performance management, and the emergence of the European surveillance society. All these developments raise questions about the ethics involved, particularly why ethics are so important for security in general and for the police in particular. The answer may be that the police derive their social legitimacy from citizen confidence; that is, both the citizenry and competent authorities in a democracy must be able to place their confidence and trust in the integrity of the police system, which, as the body charged with maintaining law, is one of the most important institutions for protecting the integrity of governance, business, and the community (Fijnaut & Huberts, 2002; Mischkowitz, Bruhn, Desch, Hübner, & Beese, 2000). When the police themselves are corrupt, the results are dire. Thus, integrity is obviously a necessary condition for law enforcement credibility and legitimacy (Huberts, 1998; Kaptein & Van Reenen, 2001; Newburn, 1999; Punch, 1985).

To explore this assumption in more detail, we return to the original view of police morality and integrity presented by the late Frans Denkers (as cited in Van Beers, 2000), who argued that the police were not established to catch scoundrels and put down riots – which citizens may be able to do more quickly and efficiently themselves – but rather for fear of abuse of power, arbitrariness, disproportionality, bias, discrimination, and conflict of interest. In other words, society fears that if fighting crime is left to citizens, as interested parties and emotional victims, they may overreach themselves and take the law excessively into their own hands (vigilantism). Therefore, according to Denkers, society originally set up organised police and justice systems not to catch criminals and reduce crime but to do so less emotionally, less prejudicially, more decently, and with fewer vested interest than citizens. In other words, police organisations act as neutral mediators between citizens or between the citizen and the state. Police integrity is thus a central conditional concept in the organisation of neutral mediation, and its antithesis is police abuse of power in a manner contrary to the governing standards. Such corrosion of power includes police corruption, fraud, and misconduct in general. On the other hand, Miller & Blackler (2005), in their discussion on ethical issues in policing, argued that police officers, as members of a particular profession, internalise the fundamental ends that define it (p. 137). Hence,

for these authors, the self-defined fundamental objective for police is to protect the moral rights of citizens.

Combining Huberts' (1998) definition of the police task – the maintenance 'in a social system [of] the joint standards and rules, while protecting everybody's safety, if necessary under force' (p. 3) – with the viewpoints of Denkers and Miller & Blackler underscores why integrity is so essential for police and security organisations. Whereas the police organisation implies a need to compulsively maintain standards and rules (i.e. it imposes integrity on their observance), it also implies that police embarkation on a slippery slope would be disastrous. Thus, integrity, while important for all types of organisations, is crucial for police organisations, which are permeated by its very essence.

Kleinig (1996) also stressed the importance of developing accountability structures for situations that he referred to as *private policing* (p. 22). However, we suggest that integrity is even more essential to players in that security field because they are not bound by criminal procedure acts and other regulations developed to protect the public against unauthorised governmental interference. In fact, the private security and investigation branch sometimes holds more authority than the police. It may well be asked, then, how they should deal with such aspects as surveillance, conducting searches in automated environments, and the right of a suspect to remain silent.

In addition, integrity or ethical behaviour means more than simply not being corrupt or fraudulent; rather, it is a feature or characteristic of either individual or organisational behaviour that denotes the quality of acting according to the moral values, standards, and rules accepted by organisational members and stakeholders. Thus, one crucial aspect of organisational integrity is the absence of corruption and fraud. Likewise, one of the most generally accepted norms for organisational conduct and decision-making in the public sector is that private interests should not interfere with organisational and public responsibilities. From this perspective, civil servants are corrupt when they damage organisational and/or public interests for personal gain. In fact, Van den Heuvel, Huberts, and Verberk (2002) argued that, even though social values are so numerous, politics and public administration have the ethical obligation to arrange and organise society in a just and honest way. Thus, applied to public and private organisations, organisational integrity can be defined not only as organisational conduct compliant with the moral values, standards, norms, and rules accepted by the organisation's members and stakeholders, but also as the commitment to an equal distribution of public services to all citizens.

Unethical conduct is made recognisable by the incidence and prevalence of integrity violations, defined as violations of social moral values and norms and the laws and rules resulting from them. Hence, as Treviño, Weaver, Gibson and Toffler (1999) pointed out, 'effective ethics and compliance management should be associated with less unethical and illegal behaviour' (pp. 132–133). To develop a framework for research in this field, Huberts, Pijl and Steen (1999) conducted a meta-analysis of the

literature on integrity and corruption, within the police force (Ahlf, 1997; Anechiarico & Jacobs, 1996; Heidenheimer, Johnston, & Levine, 1989; Kleinig, 1996; Punch, 1985; Punch, Kolthoff, Van der Vijver, & Van Vliet, 1993; Roebuck & Barker, 1973; Sherman, 1974) and developed the following 10 category typology for classifying and measuring integrity violations:

1. Corruption, the abuse of office for private gain, including bribing and kickbacks.
2. Corruption, nepotism, cronyism, and patronage.
3. Fraud and theft of resources, including the manipulation of information to cover up fraud.
4. Conflict of private and public interest through gifts or services, promises, or the possession of assets.
5. Conflict of interest through jobs and activities outside the organisation, such as moonlighting.
6. Abuse of authority.
7. Abuse and manipulation of information, such as unauthorised and improper use of information or leaking of confidential information.
8. Discrimination and sexual harassment and other indecent treatment of colleagues or citizens.
9. Waste and abuse of organisational resources, such as careless use of official vehicles or falsely reporting in sick.
10. Misconduct during leisure time, such as domestic violence, drunken driving, or private crime.

### **2.3 Introducing Human Rights**

Until recently, the connection between corruption and human rights has been generally neglected except for two impressive reports by the International Council on Human Rights Policy (ICHRP, 2009a, 2009b), which compile the work of many individual scholars. If the definition of corruption is broadened to one of integrity violation, however, more literature emerges on the relationship between the two phenomena, especially as it relates to the police (Alderson, 1998; Fijnaut & Huberts, 2002; Lynch, 1999; Neyroud & Beckley, 2001).

The link between corruption and human rights can be approached from different angles. For example, one could argue for an independent right to live in a corruption-free world on the grounds that endemic corruption destroys the fundamental values of human dignity and political equality, which in turn undermines the implementation of most other human rights. Another approach is already well recognised in major international treaties. For instance, the ICHRP (2009a) has built a solid case for its claim that guaranteeing and implementing rights drastically reduces corruption (p. 3). As regards the other approaches that view corruption as an exclusively economic and political issue, Pearson (1999) argued that they are inadequate because they

fail to give significance to the effect of corruption on people's lives and rights (p. 3). Thus, state tolerance of corruption may result in breaches of human rights (Pearson), implying that existing international human rights mechanisms may be useful in the fight against corruption. In fact, the ICHRP claims that a state's commitment to combat corruption has traditionally run parallel with their commitment to promote and respect human rights. However, international anti-corruption conventions rarely refer to human rights and major human rights instruments seldom make reference to corruption. The few exceptions include the Preamble of the Council of Europe Criminal Law Convention on Corruption and such practical guidelines as Amnesty International's resource book for human rights activists which pays ample attention to police-related corruption (Osse, 2006).

In addition, although it is often taken for granted that corruption violates human rights, those who make the claim may have a broad range of issues in mind. For example, although it is true that when corruption is widespread, people have no access to justice, are insecure, and cannot protect their livelihoods, the assumption that all forms of corrupt practice may have a long-term impact on human rights does not automatically mean that a given act of corruption violates a human right. Hence, the ICHRP (2009a) distinguishes between direct violations; indirect violations, in which corruption is a necessary condition; and remote violations, in which corruption is one factor among others (p. 27).

Here, we offer an alternative approach: corruption and human rights violations can prosper when the same conditions are met, meaning that corruption and human rights violations are both manifestations of unethical behaviour or integrity violations. For example, in their studies of the Dutch police force, Kolthoff (2007) and Lasthuizen (2008) established that certain independent variables, like leadership style and accountability measures, have a similar effect on different forms of integrity violations, including corruption and human rights violations in a police organisation. The same trends were observable in a recent secondary analysis of survey research on another police force, which also brought to light relatively high correlations between corruption in its narrow sense (e.g. bribing, nepotism) and human rights violations (Kolthoff, in press).

The overall relationship between ethics, integrity, corruption, and human rights is summarised in Figure 2.1, in which integrity, illustrated by the conduct of an organisation or its individual members and inclusive of both corruption and human rights violations, constitutes adherence (or non-adherence) to the principles contained in the ethical foundation.



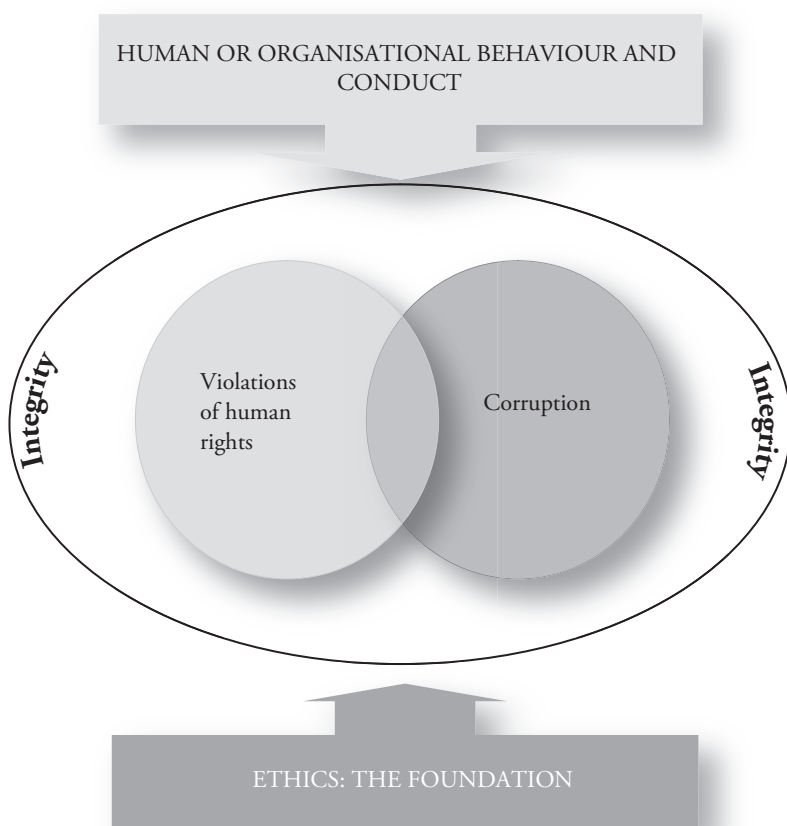


Figure 2.1 Ethics, integrity, corruption and human rights violations in perspective

Nevertheless, the question remains whether human rights as formalised in the Universal Declaration of the United Nations (and later in the European Convention on Human Rights) are indeed universal for all people and all nations around the world or whether they should be regarded as a cultural and legal post-second world war construct, drafted in 1945 and dominated by Western countries.

## 2.4 Integrity, Human Rights, and Shifting Security Paradigms

The link between integrity and human rights becomes more obvious if examined in the light of the shifting security paradigm, which poses specific challenges for safeguarding human rights. Most particularly, although the mandatory powers assigned to law enforcement agencies are increasing, the attention paid to ethics and human rights is not keeping pace. In fact, the post 9/11 period has been marked by a US/

UK led alliance (often referred to as the *war on terror*) that has catalysed states across the globe to increase their violations of human rights (Ginger, 2005). Thus, Mehigan, Walters & Westmarland (2010, p. 240) raise the question of how justice can be exercised against perpetrators of human rights abuses when the violators are representatives of the most powerful nations on earth? From this perspective, globalisation of police work or *transnational* policing – which unlike international policing has connotations of multi-nation involvement and the crossing of multiple borders – seems more of a threat to than a protection of integrity and human rights. Most particularly, because law enforcement in a global context is dependent on the gathering and sharing of intelligence, transnational policing equates to *high policing* (Brodeur, 2000, p. 43), which Westmarland (2010) differentiates from *low policing* in terms of three major aspects. That is, although both high and low policing supposedly operate for the general benefit of the state,

1. ‘high’ police are rarely concerned with criminal prosecutions, but rather collect political intelligence and disrupt activities;
2. ‘high’ police are more likely to act outside the law or ‘extra-legally’, as in ‘illegal break-ins, letter openings, and electronic surveillance’ (Andreas & Nadelmann, 2006, p. 63); and
3. ‘high’ policing investigative methods are more likely to be invasive, aggressive and manipulative (e.g. the use of undercover agents).

We further suggest a fourth characteristic, that ‘high’ policing activities are by nature more difficult to monitor since agencies and individual officers have an interest in the non-disclosure of their activities, and in a transnational context, political aspects hinder external and transparent oversight (e.g. Den Boer’s Chapter 3 in this book, and Den Boer, Hillebrand & Noelke, 2008).

In addition, more traditional elements of police work involve issues of human rights-related integrity during such interventions as arrests, house searches, and especially investigative interviewing, in which much can and does go wrong (Fahsing & Rachlew, 2009). In many countries, no specific training is given in these procedures, identities are unclear, witnesses give unreliable statements, false confessions are given under pressure, no qualified defence lawyers are available, and so forth. Admittedly, initiatives like the Innocence Project<sup>3</sup> in the United States have succeeded in exonerating many wrongly convicted individuals by providing DNA testing; however, it is still unclear whether the original injustices occurred because of noble cause corruption, carelessness, or even ignorance. Without doubt, investigative interviewing is a high-risk aspect of police work, as illustrated in the Netherlands by the unsuccessful experiments in the use of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) during such interviews. On

3 See [www.innocenceproject.org](http://www.innocenceproject.org).

the other hand, the specific methods and specially designed rooms developed for interviewing young children meet the specific needs of the persons interviewed and provide possibilities for monitoring and supervising. Nevertheless, although police officers are slowly becoming used to being video-taped during their work and having psychologists watching interviews through a one-way mirror, the debate continues over when exactly defence lawyers should gain access to suspects and whether they can be present during interviews. Moreover, such supervision is only the norm for more serious cases: the average criminal, although subject to invasive financial searches and other investigative methods, does not benefit from sophisticated techniques.

## 2.5 Prevention of Integrity Violations

Despite the above limitations, however, these challenging areas of policing still appear to be guided by the rule of law. For example, Judge Myjer (2009) of the European Court of Human Rights, in a discussion of four recent cases involving police terrorism investigations, specifically addressed the following legal issues: the absolute rights in Article 2 (the right to live) and Article 3 (the prohibition of torture) of the European Convention on Human Rights as they relate to deportation of foreigners to other countries, the ‘ticking bomb’ dilemma (whether officers can beat the truth out of a suspect if it saves the life of a third party), and strategic secret monitoring of communications. In all cases, the court ruled that the protection of individual human rights was more important than the goal achievable by violating them, no matter the noble intention. Thus, Myjer, citing a section from the preamble of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, drew the following conclusion: ‘... it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.’

Because the police are the first responsible for the maintenance of this rule, it has been suggested that in democratic societies, the objective of law enforcement should be to maximise both deterrent criminal effectiveness and conformity to the rule of law based on recognised human rights (Bayley, 2002). Nevertheless, despite Bayley’s firm argument that effectiveness and integrity in policing are not incoherent, the assumption that these goals are indeed in conflict is widespread, especially among law enforcers. Specifically, notwithstanding the need for corroboration through further research, Bayley argued that violating the rule of law (for *noble causes*) contributes marginally to deterrence, weakens the authority of law, and reduces enforcement effectiveness.

In the Netherlands, the Minister of the Interior presented a clear choice for several ex-officio obligations related to integrity in public service through the revised Civil Service Act, which became effective on 1 March, 2006 and turned the code of con-

duct into an important compulsory element of integrity policy.<sup>4</sup> To meet the standards formulated in the act, all governmental organisations signed a covenant to draft an integrity policy that includes all the following:

- a balanced integrity policy;
- development of codes of conduct;
- designation of high risk positions;
- recruitment procedures and screening for high risk positions;
- swearing of an oath or the making of a solemn pledge;
- reporting and recording of side jobs;
- disclosure of financial interests for designated positions;
- treatment of confidential information;
- a policy on presents and gifts;
- a policy on purchase and tender;
- a procedure for whistle blowing;
- a procedure for investigating signals of unethical behaviour; and
- appointment of integrity officers.

In the Netherlands, as illustrated by the establishment of internal investigation bureaux in all police forces by 1995, police have been pioneers in integrity protection. In fact, the prevention of integrity violations in many police forces has been directly attributed to these bureaux, resulting in several training and awareness activities. Moreover, in contrast to many other governmental organisations in the Netherlands, the police keep detailed records of integrity violations and their follow-up. In addition, at the end of 2005, the Council of Police Administrators and the Assembly of Chief Commissioners approved a new professional code for the Dutch police based on seven integrity values – *respect, transparency, responsibility, involvement, reliability, justice, and balance*. Not long after, the new Civil Service Act of 2006, which makes four aspects of policy integrity compulsory for all civil services including the police, resulted in the addition of the following fourth section to Article 50 of the Police Act.

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<sup>4</sup> *Kamerstukken II* (Parliamentary proceedings) 2002/03, 28 844, Nos. 1-2.

*Art. 50.4 Police Act: The authority recognised to appoint police officers shall:*

- (a) conduct an integrity policy aimed at proper official behaviour, and paying attention to stimulating awareness of integrity and preventing abuse of competences, conflict of interests, and discrimination;
- (b) ensure that the integrity policy constitutes a permanent component of the personnel policy by consistently putting forward the subject of integrity in performance appraisal interviews and staff meetings and by offering education and training in the field of integrity;
- (c) ensure the development and realisation of a code of conduct for proper official behaviour;
- (d) submit once annually a written report to the works council as well as to Our Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations on the implementation and maintenance of the integrity policy and on the observance of the code of conduct.

Because the professional code fulfils the obligation laid down in the Civil Service Act and the Police Act, in theory, police officers run the risk of disciplinary sanctions for non-compliance; however, in reality, since the project interferes with many other initiatives (e.g. development of management competency profiles), its implementation has yet to begin. Likewise, besides its objective of linking all related projects, the code is meant to be a source of inspiration for every individual police force, each of which must develop its own implementation plan. Above all, because it can be adjusted to specific circumstances, risks, and cultures, it not only offers an example of best practice but stands in stark contrast to the codes of many other organisations that simply copy a prefabricated standard model. Nonetheless, without a form of central oversight, the code is in danger of remaining a ‘dead letter’.

What, then, can be done to reduce corruption and unethical conduct? According to Miller and Blackler (2005), such reduction relates to four basic areas of policing: recruitment, opportunity reduction, detection and deterrence, and reinforcing the motivation to do what is right (p. 134). To these can be added three other areas of focus proposed initially by Fijnaut (1993) and then further explored by Punch (1994, p. 32): information/training, (repressive) control, and prevention.

Recognising the importance of identifying risk areas and taking suitable preventive measures in the sphere of personnel and technology, many authors have suggested proactive countermeasures such as integrity testing and complaints-driven reactive investigation. Although most of these measures reinforce each other, there is an observable trend of them becoming stricter, thereby increasing the risk of integrity violations, including those against human rights. As a result, in the Netherlands integrity testing has become ‘a bridge too far’, one with the potential to result, for example, in entrapment whereby the integrity of police officers is tested by special investigators offering

bribes. The risk that such actions could constitute criminal offences in themselves is considered too large.

The testing of places, technology, and systems is of course a different story. In Chapter 5 Miller calls for normalising the position of internal investigators. The arguments he uses to support his plea might be valid in the more common cases. With respect to serious and complicated cases of police corruption or abuse, however, we would opt for the exact opposite – an elite unit of the best available investigators who can expect career opportunities outside the police force after a certain period of service. Of course the old adage ‘who polices the police’ would still remain a governance challenge, as it is in anti-terrorism and intelligence units and agencies in general.

As important, however, is the culture of our law enforcement agencies, which remains an underestimated aspect. Thus, in addition to such measures as good whistle blower protection, law enforcement agencies should focus on promoting an atmosphere in which their personnel are proud of their job and have the public interest as their highest goal. In fact, arguing both that ‘it is vital to start by abandoning the individual failure model and accepting that corruption is an institutional failure’ and that ‘preventing and tackling corruption is about organisational and cultural change’ (p. 239), Punch (2009) proposed the following focus: leadership, supervision, risk assessment and awareness, a working confidential reporting system, special investigative units with a solid accountability structure, a positive counter-ideology, and external oversight.

We propose an approach in which integrity is an integral part of the daily concerns of every public administration and police force, integrity that has become the responsibility of operational and strategic management, which now has a threefold responsibility:

1. to act as role models by taking responsibility and being accountable for their own behaviour;
2. to create optimal conditions by providing a safe working environment and managing risks through removal of temptation and implementation of solid procedures and safety measures; and
3. to maintain ethics and integrity; for example, by protecting victims and reacting appropriately to unethical behaviour by employees, colleagues and superiors.

These three tasks, which focus on ethics and integrity, should be an integral part of every manager’s responsibilities, every day, in every organisation. As Berman (2006) put it, ‘... when public agencies win awards for best customer service, one can be sure that their managers have played a key role. When the results are poor, managers have had their hands in that, too’ (p. x).

If, as a society, we succeed in creating such an ethical culture in our security agencies, we will have no need of that last resort, the rule of law. However, if we fail to do so, the law had better be in place: it is the only universal, authoritative, and codified reference that is relatively immune to ‘shifting paradigms’.

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